From the

Roman Catholic Altar

To the

Protestant Pulpit

REV FRANCIS WATRY

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By Rev. Francis Watry.

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INTRODUCTION.

At the request of a number of Protestant ministers and laymen this address was delivered before large and interested audiences at Oakland, Berkeley, Tulare, and several other places in California. It was so well and favorably received by all who heard it, Roman Catholics not excepted, that many of my friends have urged me again and again, and at last prevailed upon me, to have it published in some permanent and convenient form, assuring me that it would be of great interest to a large class of people, and could not but do good.

Every day brings me in contact with people who would like to know this and that and the other thing, a hundred persons asking substantially the same questions. It is evident that I cannot on every occasion answer such questions as fully as they deserve to be answered, and this address, in printed form, will in every such instance prove a

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convenience for me, and a satisfaction and service to the inquirer.

Then there are the friends of other days, now no more. I have received from them many a letter during the past eighteen months. One expresses surprise, another pity, another regret, another indignation, another warning of the approaching doom, another the hope of my speedy return "to the bosom of our holy mother, the church," another the threat of Peter's vengeance at the gate of heaven, and yet another the assurance of undying friendship, esteem and affection even under these changed conditions. No one knows better than I do the sincerity and kindness with which these different letters were written. And hundreds of others would write me the same things, if they could but hope that it would serve what they consider a good purpose. I know of no reason why I should not entertain the hope that the more intelligent ones among them will gladly receive this address, carefully read it, and thoughtfully ponder over it. At any rate, I owe them an explanation, and

this, it is fondly hoped, will serve as such.

Let me say too, that I have not intentionally written a word to hurt the feelings of any one, and if I have failed in that respect, I beg the reader to regard it as a mistake of the head rather than of the heart. "I have never willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom," are the words of one whose memory is dear to every American heart. That appears to me as a part and parcel of true religion. I trust to be able to say the same when the night comes.

F. W.

Byron, Cal., Sept. 1, 1894.

FROM THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ALTAR TO THE PROTESTANT PULPIT

You have come here, my friends, for the purpose of listening to an address on a somewhat extraordinary topic. My subject is, in accordance with your kind request, "From the Roman Catholic altar to the Protestant pulpit." My desire is to point out to you as best I can, and as fully as the limits of this address will permit, how this journey was made. I will do this, not like one who, snugly lounging in his easy chair, might draw upon his imagination for the "facts in the case," but as one who has traveled every inch of the road, and who has thus experienced what the most fervid imagination might fail to grasp. Verily, "truth is stranger than fiction!"

But before I enter upon the details of the subject before me, I would like to say that, if there be one in this audience who has

come here with the expectation of hearing some harrowing tales or blood-curdling stories, he will have to return home greatly disappointed. I have none of those awful disclosures to make about the Roman Catholic church that are sometimes made at the expense of a great deal of lung-power that might be employed for a better purpose. These exaggerated, and often times false statements have done much toward bringing the truth itself under suspicion and making it appear incredible. If there be any truth in some of the awful things that are occasionally said and written about that church and its adherents, especially its clergy, then I thank God for not knowing anything about it. Men and women who claim to have seen so much crime there, must have been, to say the least, within easy reach of it. There must be something wrong with the eye that never detects anything but evil in others. If my neighbor and I cannot agree on certain points of doctrine and practice, it does not follow that he is a villain and I am a saint. How long will it take us to learn

that simple lesson? God grant that "with malice toward none, with charity for all" we may be ever ready and willing to testify to the truth, even as heaven grants us the privilege of seeing it. This is both our privilege and our duty.

On the 19th of September, 1880, I was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic church at St. Cloud, Minnesota. I entered at once upon the duties of my office, in the exercise of which I spent over nine years in the northern part of that state. I then removed to Oregon, and remained for three years more in the same service under Archbishop Gross, as kind and noble-hearted a man as ever wore a miter, or wielded a crozier. In January, 1893, a little more than twelve years after my ordination, I freely and deliberately resigned my charge, and informed the archbishop by letter of my intention to withdraw from the priesthood. This letter, as well as the reply to it from the archbishop, may well find their place here. No apology is nedeed for presenting them to you on this occasion. They give evidence,

as nothing else could, of my peaceful and friendly relations wlth the archbishop, and manifest the spirit in which these relations were terminated. Let me now read you these letters. My letter to the archbishop was as follows:

Jacksonville, Oregon, Jan. 9, 1893.

Most Rev. Wm. H. Gross D. D.,

Portland, Oregon.

Most Rev. Dear Archbishop:

Your Grace will be pained by the contents of this letter, even as I am in being obliged to write it.

I have thus far fulfilled the duties of my office to the best of my ability, and the confidence and good-will your Grace has ever shown me, as well as the esteem and affection of the people among whom I have lived and labored, give me the assurance that I have not abused the trust reposed in me. But I have reached a point where I must needs pause and made an open confession.

I believe with all my heart in Christianity, but I have lost faith in the Catholic church as the exponent of Christianity, and so complete is that loss that it has become impossible for me to remain where I am. I would,

therefore, kindly request your Grace to permit me to withdraw quietly, and grant me a few lines as a testimonial of character. I write this with a broken heart, and trust your Grace will in all kindness grant me my humble request. I shall be ready to leave here within a week's notice. It is my most earnest desire not to do harm where I can do no good.

With profound respect,
Your Grace's humble servant,
F. Watry.

The reply was as follows:

Portland, Oregon, Jan. 12, 1893.

Rev. Dear. F. Watry:

It is not necessary for me to tell you how deeply your letter has afflicted me. From the time that I first became acquainted with you I have always highly esteemed you. Your conduct in Oregon has been all that I could ask of a deserving priest.

I now write to advise you. My advice would be to return to some religious house, and there pray to God with all your heart: for faith is a virtue, and like all Christian virtues comes from God who gives it to them who ask it humbly and perseveringly. Let

me advise you also to lay your doubts before learned ecclesiastics. I cannot understand how a man so well educated can believe in Christianity and doubt Catholicity. For if the Catholic church is not true Christianity, then there is none.

I will in a few days send a priest to take your place, and will also testify to your good conduct in my archdiocese.

I pray God through the intercession of our Lady of Perpetual Help to restore you the gift of faith, and hope always to be your friend in Christ Jesus.

Wm. H. Gross,
Archb'p. Oregon.

Arrangements had already been made for my entrance into the Pacific Theological Seminary at Oakland, Cal., a training school for Congregational ministers. After having spent some time at that institution, I entered the ministry of the Congregational church.

Now, to some people it seems altogether incomprehensible how any one, reared in the Roman Catholic faith, trained in its schools and seminaries, who accepted its doctrines as the absolute truth, assumed the duties of

the priesthood, and for years taught others the things to the advancement of which he had promised to devote his life, should ever come to radically change his views, cut loose from his life-work and associations, and set his own frail bark adrift amid the roaring waves of the great sea of modern religious thought. It appears to them altogether absurd to say that a Roman Catholic priest could freely and deliberately leave the priesthood, unite with a Protestant church and enter its ministry, and do that with a sincere and conscientious conviction that he was doing right. It is a settled fact with them that, if such a thing does happen, it is not the result of honest conviction. The basest and most unworthy motives are suggested as having prompted the step, and these are proclaimed by them with a zeal and persistency worthy of a much better cause. There is not anything new or surprising in that. It is simply the old trick by means of which they try to undo the "evil effects of such a terrible apostasy." And it works well with some people. There is more prejudice and

narrow-mindedness in the world than we are sometimes willing to admit, and there are those who find it to their advantage to keep these things alive. As to the priest who thus leaves his priesthood, he has, in their estimation, simply lost the "grace of faith," and become an unbeliever.

These people cannot very well be blamed for being unable to see the matter in a different light. They are the creatures of a biased early training and a life-long environment. They have neither a desire nor an opportunity for a deeper study and a fearless, critical, examination of their own tenets, nor are they willing to make an honest and earnest inquiry into the beliefs of others. They are firmly and immovably settled in the belief that there is no truth outside the narrow limits of their own religious system or church. They fancy that they have "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." It is even considered a sin for them to suspect the possibility of anything else.

Under these circumstances it is well-nigh impossible for them to take a different view

of the matter. But, thank God, there is a better, a broader, a freer, a more liberal spirit abroad, and it is gradually working its way into the hearts and minds of people everywhere. Its influence cannot be resisted. It is in the very atmosphere we breathe. The man who attempts to stop its blessed influence gets ridicule and contempt for his pains. We are beginning to see that there is something on the other side of the wall. And may the Lord deal with the hand that tries to build the separation-wall any higher between my neighbor and myself!

There are, on the other hand, some people who seem to think that it is impossible for any intelligent person to sincerely believe the peculiar doctrines of the Roman Catholic church. You will notice that this is just the reverse of the Catholic idea. They (the Catholics) cannot understand how it is possible for an educated Christian man or woman to *disbelieve* the doctrines of their church. Both are extreme views, and the one is about as narrow and faulty as the other. It depends altogether upon the standpoint from

which we look at the matter, and upon the view we take of our Savior's work. If the Lord Jesus Christ established a hierarchy with all the gifts and powers that Rome claims for its bishops and priests, and placed at the head of this hierarchy an infallible teacher and judge, and commanded all men to obey, then there is no escape from Rome. No other Christian organization does, or can, lay claim to such authority over the minds and consciences of men. If, on the other hand, Jesus Christ founded a religious democracy; if the essence of his work was spiritual and ethical; if he freed man from the bondage of his fellows; if he established a direct intercourse between God and the soul; if all church forms are incidental and mere temporary arrangements; then the Roman church can have no special claims upon our minds and consciences, and we are at liberty to hold up her teachings and practices to the light of Scripture and common sense, and reject them if we find them wanting. And so it is quite possible for an intelligent person to believe all that the Roman Catholic church teaches,

and it is just as possible to reject her doctrines.

But can both of these views be based and defended upon the authority of the Scriptures? They can. There are passages in the New Testament which, if separated from the context and taken by themselves, prove the claims of the Roman Catholic church with a clearness that rivals the brilliancy of the noon-day sun. But if these same passages are read by the light that other passages throw upon them, if the New Testament is taken as a whole, if the spirit, and not the letter, is the decisive element in the Word of God, then the Roman claims must go the way of all flesh, and the opposite view is established. It remains for you and me to decide which is the more sensible way of looking at these things, and which is the more honest method of dealing with the Word of God.

Roman Catholics are accustomed to say that Protestants take single passages from the Bible and base their belief upon them. But that is exactly the great sin of the Roman Catholic church, and yet she has the

hardihood to charge it upon others. That is the reason why she is not anxious to have the people read and study the Bible. Some people are under the impression that Catholics are not even permitted to read the Bible. As a rule, that is not true. They are permitted to read it, but it must be an edition of the Bible indorsed by the authorities of that church. These editions are provided with annotations, or foot-notes, explaining away the plain meaning of texts that are not in harmony with Roman Catholic doctrine, and putting a favorable construction upon others. They are permitted to read the Bible, but not to understand and interpret its teachings. Roman Catholics must be ready and willing to say with Cardinal Wiseman: "When I find the signification of a text definitively settled by the church upon the authority of tradition, I am at once fully satisfied that the decision must be correct." With that spirit of blind and unquestioning obedience they are permitted to read all they want. The warden of a certain penitentiary, so the story goes, managed to persuade the prisoners that they en-

joyed full liberty while under his care. The only restriction imposed upon them was not to go outside the enclosure, and that was, he said, for their own special benefit, because they were sure to get into trouble if they ventured to step across the line. That is Roman Catholic freedom of thought, and the basis upon which it rests.

When I say that it is possible for one to believe all that the Roman Catholic church teaches, and believe it without the slightest misgiving, I speak from personal experience. There was a time when I believed every iota of the teachings of that church. There was a time when I thought no sincere and earnest Christian man or woman could fail to see that it was, what it so earnestly and persistently claims to be, *the* church, and that obedience to it was obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. That belief had been instilled into my mind in my childhood, and very few people can have a greater love and a profounder reverence for its mode of worship, its ordinances and its teachings than I had. And long after I had come to regard these as mere empty

forms, I could not but deal reverently with them, even as we deal reverently with our dead.

And now let me tell you how the way was opened for that radical change of my religious views which were at one time dearer to me than all else, yea than life itself.

It was in the summer of 1884, four years after my ordination. A very dear and intimate friend of mine, an intelligent and conscientious member of my church, had come to spend the evening with me. His visits were frequent and, I believe, mutually agreeable and helpful. On that particular occasion our conversation turned to church matters. In fact it almost always did. He mentioned among other things the change that had taken place within the past few years in the attitude of the non-Catholic people of that place toward our church, and spoke of their frequent attendance at our services, and their willingness to help us in every way. But there was something more he wanted to tell me. He was afraid, however, of offending me by apparently desiring to meddle in a

matter that he, as a good Catholic, thought might be left solely to my judgment. And so very cautiously and very mildly he gave me to understand that, when preaching on Catholic doctrine, a thing that I was very fond of doing, I did not always state the other side of the question with anything like fairness, and that intelligent Protestants might have good reason for being offended thereby. The Protestant side of the question, he ventured to suggest, was weak enough anyway, and we ought to by all means give them credit for what they had. Of course, I disagreed with him and volunteered the assertion that the Protestant side of any question was not only weak, but dead, and that any attempt to admit that they had a reasonable excuse for holding views of their own, and for not submitting to the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic church, would only argue doubt and uncertainty on my part.

On the following day, as I sat in the quiet of my study, my friend's remarks of the previous evening came back to me. And it was then that I remembered having once made

a similar suggestion to a professor of theology, when I was yet a student at the seminary. I had told him that I thought students of Roman Catholic theology ought to study Protestant theology side by side with their own in order that, becoming thus acquainted with both sides of the question, they might be enabled to argue the more intelligently and effectively. His reply was, that Protestants had no theology worthy of that name, that if we were to study what they call their theology it would only serve to create confusion, that it might be a dangerous experiment for some of us, and, finally, that whoever had the truth had both sides of the question. This answer to my seemingly absurd suggestion was given with a peculiar emphasis, caused, no doubt, by indignant surprise that one of his scholars should speak of a Protestant theology and of the possibility of any good to be derived from the study of the thing. It was his profound conviction that we had "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," and what was the use

of paying any serious attention to anything outside of it?

But now, fully five years later, with a riper judgment, with, as I fancied, fully settled convictions, with a wider and better acquaintance with the teachings of my church, there could be no harm, it seemed to me, in finding out what Protestants really do teach. Can it be possible, I said to myself, that Roman Catholic writers misrepresent Protestant teachings? Can it be that I too make statements that are untrue and liable to give offence, simply because I am not acquainted with their principles and teachings, except what little I have been permitted to see through Roman glasses? (And these, by the way, have a magic effect upon the optic nerve). Whether that be true or not, I will find out for myself. It cannot but be helpful to me to know just what our opponents believe. And then it will give me a great deal of amusement to set up those vagaries of Protestantism, and prop them up on all sides, and then knock them over one by one. And so I resolved then and there to study Protest-

ant Christianity, not by means of garbled extracts to be found in the writings of its opponents, but as set forth in the works of its best and acknowledged representative thinkers of the day.

The door was now thrown wide open, so to speak, and in they came, one by one, these invited guests, and talked with me in the quiet nooks and corners of my study, followed me on my solitary walks, and even in the dead of night they began to turn my weary head restlessly upon its pillow. Sometimes I tried to quarrel with them. But it takes two to quarrel. Their uniform kindness and evenness of temper gave me no chance to engage in a wordy warfare. They were not interested in building up a system. They did not care particularly whether others believed exactly as they did or not. They were disinterested searchers after the truth. With one accord they led me to the fountain of all religious knowledge, the revealed Word of God, and assisted me to see its charming beauties and to discover its golden treasures. In a word, they took me by surprise.

Not a year had gone by before I began to feel the effects of this new line of reading and study. In the preparation of my sermons I felt it most painfully. The old arguments, which I had been accustomed to look upon as unanswerable and all-prevailing, were no longer the same with me. One of my new friends had turned his searchlight upon this one, and its defects were plainly visible; and another had put his finger upon the foundation of that one, and down it came with a crash. Sometimes the Protestant side of the question would present itself with such clearness and vigor, that I was frequently obliged to throw aside a half-finished sermon and follow another line of thought where David had not yet come in contact with the Philistine.

A new world of ideas was fast opening up before me. I felt the old ground giving way under my feet, slowly but surely, and, as it were, inch by inch. This alarmed me, and I consigned my books and reading matter to the flames. There was a time when "heretics" were dealt with in the same summary way, but their "heresies" would not burn

These remained to bless the world, and to serve as the means for the spiritual emancipation of our race. My books were consumed by the fire, but their contents were not within its reach. The fact of the matter was that I was thus making room for a new supply of literature of the same class. The temptation to follow the new line of thought to the bitter end was too strong for me to offer an effectual resistance. On account of the position I then occupied these things made my life thenceforth a mixture of strange contradictions, of most bitter sorrows, of useless and constant regrets, of untold anxieties, and of a mental agony that no tongue can tell and no pen, though dipped in tears and blood, can adequately describe.

Whither was I drifting? Those blessed days when all was peace and contentment within seemed gone, nevermore to return. Would it not have been far better to leave the "forbidden fruit" untouched? What possible good can there come from the unsettling of a person's inherited belief so long as it satisfies the heart and the conscience? What

will it benefit any one to expose himself to danger in search of something, the need of which is not felt so long as it remains hidden? These and a thousand other questions of a similar nature were before me night and day for those many long years. The reply is easy enough now, but it was not so then.

I was like one standing on a little island, surrounded by a wild and boisterous sea. There was a time when I felt absolutely safe there, and harbored no thought of any possible danger. But one day I discovered a point where the waves had begun to wash away the earth, and as I stood there wondering how that could be, I noticed how each wave as it fell back from the shore carried away something. That something, however little, was an integral portion of the island. If that were to continue, what would become of the little island? And if the ground should be washed away from under my feet, what would become of me? There seemed to be no alternative but to go down into the deep. Day by day I watched with increasing anxiety and alarm the stealthy progress

of the encroaching waves. Portions of the island began to disappear from time to time, and I shifted my tent to what seemed to me higher and firmer ground. But one disappointment succeeded another until at last there was not enough left whereupon to rest my feet. The last handful of earth had been carried away, and I—well, imagine if you can the unspeakable astonishment and bewildering surprise of the discovery, I found my feet resting on a rock, "and that Rock was Christ." What had been carried away was nothing but loose earth and debris, the accumulation of ages. Untold anxiety, yea grim despair, had taken possession of me while the process of destruction was going on. I looked into the future without hope, because I was not aware of the Rock so strangely hidden under a mass of useless and treacherous matter, and knew not that the latter must needs be removed before Jesus Christ, the Rock of salvation, can be fully revealed to the soul.

Some time ago I saw a man tearing down an old building that had braved the storms and tempests of years. It had served the

purpose for which it was built, and might have done so for years to come. But its owner had discovered flaws in it on all sides. He examined the foundation and found it in excellent condition, and so determined to remove the superstructure and build anew upon the old foundation. His neighbors called him foolish and extravagant, but he now rejoices in a new and better building. Even so has every man a right to tear down, provided he can raise in its stead a better structure. But let no man cruelly tear down the old moss-covered cottage, unless he is sure that he can build a statelier edifice upon its foundation. In like manner let no man deprive himself or his neighbor of his inherited belief, unless he has something better, higher, truer, nobler to take its place. But when this latter is at hand, then let the former go—yea, let it go, though the heart bleed and the soul be wrung with the agonies of death.

It is hardly necessary for me to say that, in an address like this, one cannot do more than merely touch upon a few of the many

things that naturally belong to, and are most intimately connected with the subject. To compare Protestant with Roman Catholic doctrines, views and practices, and give reasons, one by one, for abandoning the one and embracing the other, would require volumes, and an ability to handle a mass of material to which I can lay no claim. Any one interested in that line of thought can find abundant information elsewhere, especially in a thoughtful, prayerful, unpredjudiced study of the New Testament. My object is, rather, to give you the result of a long, arduous, unremitting, earnest and painful inquiry into the faith of my childhood. If another undertakes the same thing and obtains different results, I am not in the least inclined to question his wisdom, honesty and sincerity. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." Let me then briefly mention a few of the more important thoughts connected with my subject.

The question has been asked of me again and again, whose works influenced me most,

or were most helpful to me, during that gradual and prolonged process of change. My reply to that question is, that the study of the New Testament has made me a Protestant. Whatever help has come to me from scores of thoughtful and learned writers has been an indirect help only, inasmuch as they assisted me to a better, deeper, broader and fuller understanding of the Word of God. I accepted no man's conclusions blindly; nor did any one expect me to do so. I did not renounce the Pope of Rome in order to submit to pope Somebodyelse.

The Roman Catholic will greet the statement, that the study of the New Testament should have made me a Protestant, with a cynical smile. He will have a desire to know what there can be in the New Testament to produce such results. He will say that that is an old story, and that every heretic from first to last has claimed the same thing. But, if that be true, is not the unanimous consent of so many a point in its favor? And if it be an *old* story, ought not then the Roman Catholic to be the first to

treat it with deference and respect, since in his estimation every story increases in value with its years? He accepts a good many things for no better reason than that they are hoary with age. If it were possible for me to tell him in a single sentence what I have found in the New Testament, I would gladly do so. But since that is not possible, it may be well to do the next best thing and say what I have *not* found there, and that is the Roman Catholic church-system. If there be anything anywhere conspicuous by its absence, that is the thing.

The most fruitful source of controversies is the fact, that men will attach two or more different meanings to one and the same word, or term, and then undertake to explain, illustrate and defend a thing from these different points of view. The result is that, instead of coming to a better understanding of the matter, they become involved in a more hopeless confusion. The inevitable tendency of such controversies is to widen the gap between the contending parties. They will insist upon showing how greatly they differ, instead

of trying to find out how closely they agree with each other.

Take, for example, the word *church.* When Protestants speak of the Church in the New Testament sense, they mean either the whole body of believers in Christ, the Church universal; or a particular congregagation, in a local sense. When Roman Catholics speak of the Church, they mean a body of people who profess the same faith, partake of the same sacraments and are subject to the same "lawful" pastors, especially to the Pope of Rome. With these two totally different conceptions of the Church the Protestant and the Roman Catholic will enter into a discussion, the central thought of which is the Church. The Roman Catholic calmly rehearses what he considers unanswerable arguments, and will go away wondering how his opponent can possibly listen to such a volume of inexorable logic as he has poured upon him without crying out: "I am undone, the victory is yours!" The Protestant, on the other hand, compassionately pities his antagonist who would insist upon reading ev-

ery one out of the kingdom of God who cannot follow him in reading into the Scriptures something that is evidently not there. And so after a long and wearisome discussion, carried on with more or less bitterness on both sides, they come to realize that it is utterly useless to argue about the matter, unless both parties first agree as to the meaning of the word *church*. And what is true in this case is true in a thousand other instances.

The Roman Catholic system rests largely upon the supposition that our Lord made Peter the head of the Apostles, and supreme judge in all matters pertaining to faith and morals, by whose decision the faithful, both pastors and people, were bound to abide. He is supposed to have been bishop of Rome and to have transmitted to his successors at Rome these same prerogatives which he is said to have received at the hands of his Master. That would consequently make the Roman bishop the vicar, or representative, of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

Now, the most pertinent question with regard to this all-important claim is, Was Peter

recognized as such by his brethren? If so, it is a strong point in favor of the Roman Catholic position: if not, the whole theory must be looked upon as a gratuitous and unwarranted assumption. Of course, Roman Catholics say, that he was recognized as such during his lifetime, and refer to a number of instances which, in their estimation, are conclusive evidence of the truth of their claim. Especial emphasis is laid upon these two:—They tell us that Peter presided at the council of Jerusalem, and that Paul went to Jerusalem "to see Peter," lest he (Paul) "should run, or had run, in vain." With regard to the former, it must be said that Peter's presidency at that council is not only extremely doubtful, but that it is well-nigh an absolute certainty that James presided and submitted the final decree, saying; "Wherefore my sentence is etc.; or as the authorized Roman Catholic Bible, the Douay version, has it: "For which cause I judge that they etc." (Acts xv-19). Peter simply took part in the discussion. Barnabas and Paul followed him, and James submitted the

decree which was finally adopted. Only an irresistable desire to have Peter appear at that council in the attitude of a pope can force the conclusion that he presided. There is nothing mysterious about the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, and "he who runs may read."

With reference to the latter instance, it must be confessed that Paul did go to Jerusalem to see Peter, a fact put on record by Paul himself in his epistle to the Galatians. But to claim, as our Catholic friends are inclined to do, that he went there to get any authority from Peter to preach the gospel, is absurd. Paul had his commission from the Lord Jesus Christ, and had no need of any authority from man. It is true that he expresses his fear of having labored, or of even then laboring, in vain, and that fear was the probable cause of his desire to see Peter. But that fear arose from the fact that Peter was altogether too much inclined to put "new wine into old bottles," that is, to retain old Jewish customs so utterly incompatible with the spiritual doctrines and practices of the

Lord Jesus and his followers. Paul's labors would, indeed, have been in vain, if Peter's tendencies in that direction had prevailed. Paul went to Jerusalem to see Peter, not to obtain from him any approval for his work, or anything of the kind, but to urge upon Peter and others the necessity of breaking away, once and forever, from the dead formalism of Jewish religious life and customs. I fancy that, if Paul were to re-appear upon the earth to-day, he would most assuredly go "to see Peter," and the interview would be one of the most sensational things of this interesting age.

The Roman Catholic doctrine, that the priest is a mediator between God and men, the dispenser of sacraments, supposed to be the necessary means of a soul's salvation, is among the secrets of the vast, almost absolute, power the priest has over the hearts and minds and consciences of his people. It is the one thing which makes that religious system of inestimable value in the eyes of its adherents. It is very gratifying to human nature to feel that one has such powers be-

stowed on him from on high, prerogatives that transcend those of the highest archangel. It is likewise very pleasing to those who can imagine that they are the recipients of those wonderful gifts that seem to come to them through the hands of the priest. But what, if all that is but an idle dream? What, if the Lord Jesus Christ did not institute a priesthood in the Roman Catholic sense, and if all these priestly pretentions be only an innovation of a later age? What, if the very word *priest*, in the sense of "a mediator between God and man" be not once applied to the apostles and disciples of Christ in the New Testament? "The Apostles give to themselves and to Christian ministers ten separate names, but the one which they *never* give to themselves, and which they absolutely withhold from presbyters, is the name 'priest.' . . . . . The voice of Scripture cuts away the very taproot of the whole sacerdotal system." Priest is "the one term which the New Testament most absolutely ignores, and the one title which the whole system and reasoning of the New Testament most decisively rejects

and condemns." Paul's language on this point is very clear and to the point. He does not know anything of priests, men who are to act as mediators between God and man. In I Timothy II: 5 he says: "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."—"We have under the Gospel," says Dr. Angus, "one Priest only in the deeper sense of that word, a Mediator and a sacrifice, who has made complete atonement for sin. The usurpation of his office is on the part of those who assume to themselves the name of priests, and pretend to offer sacrifices for the sins of the living and the dead. Here is the sin of Korah; the more guilty as Christ is greater than Aaron, and as his perfect sacrifice is superior to the shadowy sacrifices of the ancient Law."

The Apostles and disciples of our Saviour never pretended to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the living or the dead, or to perform any peculiarly priestly function. This is so evident that nobody cares to deny it. Roman Catholics, in trying to find a basis for their system, fall back upon the theory of develop-

ment. But there can be no development where there is no germ. Now, the ministry established by our Lord had not in it the germ of a priesthood such as Rome claims to have. Consequently it was no development at all, but rather the introduction of a new theory, altogether foreign to the true Christian ministry. As well may the Mormons claim that polygamy is a development of, what they are pleased to call, an imperfect state of society. One of the bitterest fruits, one of the saddest results, of this pretended priestly power and sacramental materialism is auricular confession. There is not a trace, not the faintest vestige of it in the New Testament. It came in with the doctrine of the priest's power to forgive sins, and followed as naturally as the shadow follows the substance. There can be no doubt about it, that it was gradually introduced during the darkest part of the Dark Ages, and it has been stamped by age after age, by generation after generation, with the stigma of unqualified abhorrence. It is worthy of note that no Roman Catholic theologian pretends to know just

when and where it was first introduced and practised. Far from it! They rather make this impenetrable obscurity as to its origin an argument in its favor, and claim that it must be on that account of Apostolic origin. Just as if anything that is now believed and practised in that church, the first beginnings of which cannot be pointed out with any degree of certainty, were necessarily of Apostolic origin! That is, indeed, an easy way of settling difficulties, but it is hardly satisfactory to any one who does not feel like going through life blindfolded. There is not now, and there never was, in the hands of any man the power to forgive sins. God alone can say, I absolve thee. Let me tell you, however, that a great many things that are said about the confessional are untrue. For example, some will tell you that the priest is paid for giving absolution, and that the amount he receives is in proportion to the number and enormity of the sins which he pretends to forgive. That is false. Others will say that priests make use of the confessional to lead people, especially women, into

sin. That is worse than false. It is slander. There have been instances of that kind, but they are extremely rare, and not worth speaking of. I cannot understand why any one should have recourse to such things for the purpose of obtaining arguments against the confessional. The one great argument against the confessional is the truth about it. Let the truth be told, and nothing but the truth, and "the truth will make you free."

Not unlike a great many other worthless things, there is some good in the confessional. It occasionally prevents some people from committing sin—people who do not realize the enormity of sin in the sight of God, but who would be afraid of confessing to a fellow-man that they had been guilty of such or such a sin. A poor, beggarly, mean motive, indeed, for abstaining from evil; but it is far better than no motive at all. That is, if anything, the one redeeming feature about the confessional. Over against this doubtful good, however, must be placed the indisputable fact that the hope of obtaining a positive and visible forgiveness from time to time through

the confessional keeps a good many people carelessly in sin. Auricular confession is, furthermore, an instrument of tyranny over the hearts, minds and consciences of men, for the condemnation of which no words can be strong enough. It is, finally, a foul deceiver. Eternity alone can reveal how many and how enormous have been its deceptions. Thousands upon thousands confess their sins to the priest, receive absolution, and go forth under the impression that they are now free from those sins, while in the sight of God they are as guilty, if not guiltier than they were before. God has laid down the conditions, few and simple, for obtaining the forgiveness of sin. Let a man comply with these conditions, and his sins are forgiven, and he needs no one to absolve him; let him refuse to comply with these conditions, and there is no power in heaven or on earth that *can* absolve him. "Repent"—"sin no more"—"follow me"—and let the confessionals be put into some museum for the curiosity-seekers of a later age.

"There is one God, and one mediator be-

tween God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Paul! Paul! that is rather hard on the saints of the Roman calendar. If you had lived during the Middle Ages, they would have burned you at the stake. If you were on earth to-day, you would be numbered among the archheretics and enemies of "our holy mother the church." If there be only one mediator between God and men, what becomes of the army of saints to whom men pray to intercede for them? It is, first of all, very doubtful whether all those "saints" of the Roman calendar are in heaven. Granted that they are in heaven, it does not at all follow that they can hear our prayers. Granted that they are in heaven and can hear our prayers, it still remains exceedingly doubtful whether they can or will do anything for us. There is not one single, solitary passage in the Word of God that might in any way be construed so as to teach the doctrine and practice of praying to the saints, and not one single, solitary example of a prayer to a departed saint. And if we are to judge these saints, even the choicest and best of them, by

their behavior while on earth, it would seem to be worse than loss of time and wasteful expenditure of lung-power to pray to them.

We read that, when little children were brought to the Saviour "that he should put his hands on them and pray," the good saints who accompanied our Lord tried hard to prevent these pious mothers from obtaining the coveted blessing for their children, and it required the command of the Master, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," to make it possible for them to approach him. Perhaps if they had first applied to the disciples, or saints, they would have had less difficulty. Less difficulty? Why they would not have reached the Saviour at all. They would, no doubt, have shared the fate of those Greeks of whom we read in John XII: 20–24. They had come to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. They wanted to see our Lord, and so they came to Philip, a saint, and said to him, "Sir we would see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew, another saint, and Philip and Andrew, the two saints, came to Jesus and laid the

prayer of the Greeks before him. All they got was an answer, the meaning of which they could not then divine, and the poor Greeks never saw Jesus. If the "saints" have no better success where they are now supposed to be, and there is nothing to show that they have, then it is evidently worse than useless to pray to them.

If there ever was a human being who had every reason to believe that he was unworthy to go directly to the Lord in prayer, and, therefore, needed someone better than himself to intercede for him, that was evidently the penitent thief, dying on the cross beside our crucified Savior. And not only had he reason to consider himself most unworthy, but he also had the saints of saints, Mary and John, right at hand to intercede for him. But his prayer was directed to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And back came the answer, tender and sweet and consoling and assuring: "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "There is one God,

and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

There are scores of other doctrines and practices peculiar to the Roman Catholic church for which there is no warrant in the Bible. With reference to all these the Westminster Confession very truthfully and emphatically declares: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith and worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also."

From what I have said thus far it must be quite evident to almost any one, that my stay in the communion of the Roman Catholic church had become a moral impossibility Loss of faith in the doctrines and practices peculiar to the Roman Catholic church, however, does not of itself make it impossible for

a priest to remain where he is. I am personally acquainted with a number of priests who have as little faith in these things as I have, and who yet remain in the priesthood. It is possible for them to remain there, because they have lost faith not only in the peculiar doctrines and practices of Rome, but in Christianity itself. I say this with no desire whatever of saying an unkind word about any one. I say it, because it is the truth. God knows, I pity them from my heart. Those poor men were, like myself, fed on saint's legends, and nurtured on the inconsistencies of superstition, and made to believe that self-torture was a species of godliness; things that easily prepare the solitary thinker to disgorge the whole creed, and go down into utter and hopeless skepticism, regarding all forms of religion as equally true and equally false.

From Romè to unbelief
The step is very, very brief.

They remain, because they know of nothing truer or better anywhere else. Could they but separate divine truth from human

inconsistencies, could they but lay all prejudice aside, and earnestly and prayerfully search for the divine gem hidden under a mass of human chaff, the "Sun of righteousness" would arise upon them "with healing in his wings," and they would cry out, "Arise, let us go hence."

Let no one, however, understand me as saying, that the majority, or even a very large number, of priests do not fully believe all those peculiar doctrines of Rome. They do believe them and are contented and happy therein. Impossible, you say? Not at all! Did you ever know of a chick that felt discontented and unhappy in its shell? Certainly not. Of course it is death to remain there beyond the proper time, but the chick is not conscious of that and dies without even a struggle. Life and happiness and contentment are found in their fulness outside of the shell, it is true, but the want of these things is not felt until after they have become known and enjoyed. The unhappiness and misery and despair of the chick begin when

it vainly, yet persistently, and doggedly, attempts to crawl back into its shell.

I have said that the loss of faith in the doctrines and practices peculiar to the Roman church does not of itself make it impossible for a priest to remain there when he has also lost faith in Christianity itself. But when one retains a strong, real, living faith in Christianity, stripped of all the trumpery with which Rome has tried to adorn (?) the simple Gospel of our Saviour and the sublime teachings of the Apostles, I cannot conceive of anything that might justify his stay, or make it possible. Such was the case with me.

My journey, then, from the Roman Catholic altar to the Protestant pulpit was in reality no longer a matter of mere choice, but of real necessity. The loss of everything that had hitherto made life worth living had to inevitably follow the step. But "whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." The Lord's promises cannot fail. No longer "entangled with the yoke of bondage" I have found new life "in the liberty with

which Christ hath made us free." And now "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."

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